

EXHIBIT 18

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR
THE DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS

Somerville Public Schools, et al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

Donald J. Trump, et al.,

Defendants.

Civil Case No. 1:25-cv-10677

Declaration of Rubén Carmona

I, Dr. Rubén Carmona, declare under penalty of perjury, under 28 U.S.C. § 1746, that the following is true and correct:

1. I am Rubén Carmona. I am the superintendent of the Somerville Public Schools (hereinafter “Somerville”) in Massachusetts. I have held this position since 2023. I make this declaration based on my personal knowledge, by Somerville’s business records, and by public records in Somerville’s possession.

2. I have 27 years of experience in K-12 education, including close to two decades as a building leader, Principal Coach and Executive Director of Family, Community and Employee Engagement in the Salem Public Schools. After earning an undergraduate degree in Modern Languages/Linguistics at the Universidad del Valle-Cali in Colombia, I earned Master’s degrees

in Business Administration and Educational Leadership at Salem State College. In 2012, I earned my Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership at Boston College.

3. As Superintendent, my primary responsibility is to support both the central office team and building leaders in continuously strengthening a student-centered community of practice. Achieving this alignment requires daily engagement with all members of the Somerville Public Schools community, ensuring that our core message of high expectations for all remains clear and consistent.

4. Creating the conditions for students and educators to thrive is both a challenge and a commitment that we have embraced as a district. My goal is to drive large-scale improvement to ensure that every student has access to grade-level instruction, is empowered and engaged, and feels a strong sense of belonging.

5. Somerville is fortunate to have a dedicated team of educators, building leaders, and central office administrators who believe in the transformative power of public education. A key part of my role is to maximize resources and operational efficiencies to create the conditions for smooth, effective school operations. I provide executive leadership and strategic direction for all departments, services, and programs while overseeing the implementation of long-range plans for the district.

6. We are currently in the early implementation stages of our strategic plan, developed in collaboration with Somerville staff, to advance our vision for student success.

7. Somerville is a small yet dynamic school district just outside Boston, serving nearly 5,000 students from preschool through 12th grade across 11 schools with the support of approximately 600 full-time educators.

Department of Education Funding

8. During the 2024-25 school year, Somerville operates on a budget of about \$106 million. Of that, approximately 6 percent comes from funds administered by the federal government: about \$3.5 million in federal entitlement grants (including Title I, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or “IDEA,” and Perkins Act funds) through the Department of Education, and another \$4 million in grants for our food program and free school lunches.

9. This funding is vital to ensuring that Somerville can continue to meet the needs of all our students in the district. Federal funds help to pay for at least 28 staff members.

Department of Education Title I, Title II, and Title IV Funding

10. Somerville relies on federal grant programs (including Title I, Title II, and Title IV) to support a wide range of purposes that touches nearly every area of our schools’ work, from teachers’ salaries to textbooks.

11. One of the most important programs under which we receive Department of Education-administered funding is Title I. Somerville receives \$1.1 million dollars in Title I funding.

12. Somerville uses Title I funding to pay for staff, including teachers. These funds support educators (10 reading teachers and three math interventionists are supported in part by these funds), pre-kindergarten educators, tutoring for at-risk students, and professional development designed to help staff maximize their effectiveness.

13. If our Title I funding were cut, delayed, or otherwise impeded, we would be losing funds used to pay staff and fund professional development activities. If we had to lay off staff, that would result in larger classroom sizes. In turn, those changes would have downstream effects, as larger class sizes make it more difficult for students to learn, and may impact our

ability to fulfill federally required Individualized Education Programs (“IEPs”) for our schoolchildren with disabilities.

14. We also use some of our Title I funds to pay for economically disadvantaged children in our preschool program. If our Title I funds were cut, delayed, or otherwise impeded, or if the threat of that impediment remains, then we might have to increase our preschool classroom sizes or raise attendance fees.

15. Our Title I funds also allow us to hold a summer program. Our summer school program typically covers between 100 and 150 students. It allows our educators to help prevent at-risk students from suffering learning loss during the summer; in many cases, we are even able to help those students make academic gains. But if our Title I funding were cut, delayed, or otherwise impeded, or if the current cloud of doubt about the availability of grant funding is not alleviated, then we will face difficult decisions about whether the summer school program can proceed as planned, whether it needs to be cut back, or whether it needs to be cancelled.

16. At Somerville, our summer school enrollment is made up disproportionately of children from lower-income households. Among many other benefits, summer school gives these children access to healthy meals during a months-long period when they otherwise might not have such access. If Somerville cannot run robust summer programs, students would not only fall behind academically; their nutrition and health would also suffer.

17. Students would suffer the most from this loss. But losing summer school would cause harm on our students’ families as well. Many parents of our summer school students rely on us to care for their children during the day so that they can go to work. Title I funding administered by the Department of Education not only makes summer school possible, but it also helps us pay for students’ transportation to and from summer school. Without summer school, or even without

transportation to and from summer school, there would be an enormous hardship on the way our students' families live their lives.

18. Somerville also relies on other federal funds.

19. For instance, we use Title II funds to pay for two classroom size-reduction teachers, in order to keep down our classroom sizes. If cuts, delays, or other impediments to Title II funding occurred, or if the threats thereof continue to linger, we would have to consider either layoffs or not bringing on new staff (or, if we've been forced into layoffs already, we would have to consider not replacing those staff). No matter which of those options we were forced to choose from, we would be left with larger classroom sizes, which would leave students with less one-on-one instructional time.

20. Like some of our Title I funds, Title III funding helps pay for some other school services – specifically, our English Language Learner program, which serves more than 1,200 students. Among other things, these funds help to provide summer services for our English learners. Without access to that program, those students would go without continuity in their language learning for about 10 weeks during the summer, which would cause a huge backslide in their learning.

21. We also receive Title IV funding from the Department of Education. Title IV supports schools in providing opportunities for a well-rounded education for students. One of the ways we use our Title IV funding is to pay for disadvantaged students' enrollment fees in Advanced Placement courses. If that funding were cut, delayed, or otherwise unavailable, we would have to stop paying those disadvantaged students' enrollment fees, which undoubtedly would reduce the number of students who can enroll in Advanced Placement courses. Another way we use the funding is to provide our educators with extensive professional development so they can better

address the social-emotional needs of our students. This includes training in the PBIS Framework (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports) and the Restorative Justice program.

Students with Disabilities

22. Our funding through the IDEA is our single largest source of funds coming from the Department of Education. Somerville receives nearly \$1.8 million in federal IDEA funds.

23. We use IDEA funding to pay for 4.4 special education teachers; two social workers; seven paraprofessionals; three board-certified behavior analysts; and a speech language pathologist.

24. Somerville also uses IDEA funds to provide special education students with summer school to prevent educational backsliding, smaller class sizes, and otherwise provide supports for students with disabilities. These funds also help fund professional development for staff; materials, supplies, and equipment for students receiving special education services; equitable services for private school and homeschool children who have disabilities; translation services; and systems that help Somerville manage students' IEPs.

25. Even a small reduction in federal funds of \$100,000 (the equivalent of approximately 1.25 full-time educators' salaries), or any delay in receiving those funds, could impair Somerville's ability to provide special education services to students.

26. IDEA funding is used to comply with IDEA's requirement that students with disabilities be provided a Free Appropriate Public Education ("FAPE"), through a student's IEP. Ironically, then, any cuts, delays, or other impediments to our IDEA funding would leave us in the position of having to provide FAPEs without the federal funding that is designated to help us do that.

Department of Education Technical Assistance and Resources

27. Apart from federal funding, Somerville relies on the Department of Education for technical assistance, guidance, training, and support to effectively support our students. Some of this support comes in the form of guides from the Department of Education that helps us better implement grant related programs, such as the *Guidance on Parent and Family Education Under Title I, Part A*; the *Supporting Homeless and Foster Care Students Under Title I – Quick Reference Guide*; the *Guidance on Providing Equitable Services for Eligible Private School Children under ESSA*; and the *Provisions Related to Children with Disabilities Enrolled By Their Parents in Private Schools*.

28. We rely often on technical assistance from the Department of Education, especially through their Institute for Education Sciences, which is the Department’s independent statistics, research and evaluation arm. For instance, the “What Works Clearinghouse” is a source of research-backed resources for helping schools like ours identify best practices in nearly every area of our work. If the Department’s dismantling compromised our access to that technical assistance – for instance, if the What Works Clearinghouse were unavailable, or even not updated with the latest available research, our ability to provide Somerville’s students with the best possible education would be more difficult.

29. For example, the What Works Clearinghouse recently published research-based practice guides on behavioral interventions in elementary schools, which have helped us in providing coaching and professional development to teachers. We also recently selected a new literacy program. In choosing a program, the Clearinghouse was invaluable in helping us choose a program that was evidence-based and effective. As we work with our math and reading interventionists, we use their intervention reports to help us focus on the most important practices that will most impact students and de-emphasize those that have less of a proven effect.

30. Our spending on professional development materials and services is guided by the Department of Education's research and recommendations. When seeking new curricula or methods of teaching, the up-to-date research that the Department collects is invaluable in helping us make decisions in line with the best, evidence-based approaches.

31. With respect to serving students with disabilities, the resources from the Department help our district in a variety of ways. Examples include templates for IEP forms; suggestions for high-quality assistive technology; guidance on bullying prevention for students with disabilities; and webinars for helping educators communicate effectively with families through the IEP process.

Federal Financial Aid

32. The district relies on resources from the Department's Federal Student Aid program to help support students seeking higher education—a core function and mission of our district and schools. Without Federal Student Aid services, including the FAFSA and student loan and grant programs, college would be out of reach for the vast majority of Somerville's students.

33. As part of our college counseling services, our college counselors and staff rely heavily on materials produced by FSA. These guides, videos, checklists, and forms help our counselors communicate accurately and effectively with families so they can make informed financial decisions about post-secondary education.

34. Our Title I schools have benefited from the Teacher Loan Forgiveness (TLF) Program, providing an incentive to prospective teachers to work in a low-income school. This has been especially useful in recruiting teachers for hard-to-fill positions, such as special education, ESL, math, and science.

Career and Technical Education Funding

35. Somerville also offers robust curricula in career and technical education (“CTE”), of which we are very proud. Our CTE offerings are made possible by Perkins Act funding provided by the Department of Education.

36. For our students who want to enter the workforce immediately after graduation in well-paying jobs, and also for many of our college-bound students, Somerville’s CTE trainings in electrical work, advanced manufacturing, cosmetology, nursing, and many other fields are an invaluable springboard. About 60% of Somerville high school students participate in the program.

37. The Perkins funding that makes all this possible subsidizes, among other things, CTE teaching positions, materials, certifications, and professional development opportunities. If our Perkins funding is cut, delayed, or otherwise impeded, then we would have to make cuts – likely through layoffs or fewer professional development opportunities. Again, those losses would be felt principally by our students.

Department of Education Office for Civil Rights

38. Somerville also will be harmed by the layoffs of staff in the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (“OCR”).

39. OCR creates a number of resources, including guidance documents, FAQs, pre-recorded webinars and webcasts, and resources for drafting policies that comply with civil rights statutes. The district relies on this guidance; it is crucial for helping the district understand how to comply with the law and safeguard civil rights in schools.

40. The district also benefits from OCR’s enforcement and investigatory role – OCR works as a guardrail to help ensure that districts are doing the right things.

How Funding Works and the Effect of Uncertainty

41. The money that we receive from the federal government flows to Somerville through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (“the State”). In most instances, this works through a reimbursement process: Somerville spends funds to administer the respective federal program for which it is intended, and afterward, we submit a reimbursement request to the State through an online portal – which the State then pays from its allotment of federal funds. We submit most reimbursement requests monthly; for some smaller requests, we apply for reimbursement less often. Reimbursements typically arrive in our bank account within three business days.

42. The speed with which those reimbursements arrive, and the predictability of that speed, is critical to Somerville’s financial stability: we do not have sufficient financial resources to endure long periods of time without reimbursement, nor do we have the funds that would be required for us to spend money in our budget without knowing when or if we will receive reimbursement for those expenditures.

43. Unfortunately, the President’s and Secretary of Education’s stated goals of dismantling the Department of Education, combined with the Department’s recent layoffs and other steps, have left the Department an unreliable partner for Somerville.

44. Funding uncertainty has a direct and disruptive impact on our budget, particularly when it comes to staffing and program planning. Many critical decisions must be made months in advance. Without clear assurances about funding – which has been historically stable and dependent on the seamless partnership between the federal Department of Education, the State Department of Education, and local school districts – we will be forced to make difficult choices: to proceed as though nothing has changed at the federal level and continue with the expectation of timely funds or to reduce staffing, services, and programming reliant on federal funding.

45. Without timely distribution of federal funds, our district will be less effective and students will suffer. If students fall behind academically – for example, because the district can no longer afford targeted interventions or tutoring for at-risk students, or because class sizes have gotten larger – students will suffer.

46. Eventual restoration of funding would not solve these problems. If Somerville is forced to lay off teachers, we will not necessarily be able to rehire them and would lose significant expertise. And it isn't easy to make up learning loss – as students fall behind, it becomes harder to bring them back up.

47. The threats facing the Department, including the recent layoffs, endanger our students in nonfinancial ways, too. We rely heavily on the Department's technical assistance to provide federally required services to our schoolchildren – such as best practices for correcting students who disrupt class, or the latest research-backed approaches to teaching children with disabilities. Even if that technical assistance were only no longer updated regularly, Somerville would face the loss of new best practices – which, again, would prevent our students from receiving the very best education that we can give them.

48. Finally, I want to be clear about something important. Even without funding cuts, the doubts about the availability of federal funds – and the harms they would visit upon our students – are not the product of guesswork. They are real. And they are already happening. We already do not know whether we will be able to add staff before the 2025-26 school year, or whether we will be able to provide summer school, or whether we will be able to retain staff. And the longer this goes on, the worse the impact will be. The damage will be real, and it will be really hard to fill. Ultimately, without timely and predictable funding, Somerville would be forced to make cuts –including possibly premature cuts – to staff and programs, disrupting services for students and

families. This instability makes long-term planning nearly impossible and weakens the district's ability to provide high-quality education and support.

Final Thoughts

49. I am aware of the March 14, 2025, letter sent to state education leaders by James Bergon, the acting under secretary of education, claiming that the Department of Education's dismantling "will not directly impact students and families." The letter does not provide any facts to support that statement or explanations of how and why school districts can trust that the Department's funding and technical assistance will continue to be delivered as it has been in the past.

50. Somehow, a narrative has developed that the Department of Education usurps communities' authority over their own teaching decisions and buries us in red tape. Those claims are simply not true, and my colleagues and I ought to know. Somerville is in charge of Somerville. Somerville teaches Somerville's students. Somerville decides on the best way to teach Somerville's students. Somerville's educators come to work every day bringing *their* expertise to their classrooms. The federal Department of Education has been a partner in making that happen.

Executed on March 27, 2025.



Dr. Rubén Carmona
Superintendent, Somerville Public School